

No 1

# **MODERN FARMING— SOVIET STYLE**

**by**

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P U B L I S H E R ' S   N O T E



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# MODERN FARMING—SOVIET STYLE

## THE REVOLUTION IN THE RUSSIAN VILLAGE



### I. WHY COLLECTIVIZATION WAS NEEDED

THE harvest this year in the Soviet Union is the most important harvest that has ever occurred since prehistoric man first learned to cast grain on the soil for food. A revolution goes on to-day across the countryside of Russia, a revolution marked by intense struggle, tremendous hopes, fears, mistakes, successes, which is swinging one hundred million of earth's most backward peasants into farming more modern than America. Not only more modern—but totally different in social control and in the possibilities of life open to the tillers of the soil. The harvest this year is being produced by collective farming, which is building the agricultural basis of socialism.

All nations in history, as industry and division of labor developed, have faced the agrarian problem, which may be stated as follows: "How to keep the soil tiller feeding the world while getting no share in the increasing city culture he feeds?" It has been tried by keeping the peasant suppressed and ignorant; it has been tried by stimulating his love of nature and independence; it has been tried in America by giving much land and machinery. Yet even in rich America farming is bankrupt; it cannot produce a decent living wage by city standards. The working farmer gets less than \$500 a year, with all his machinery. And to attain this bankrupt

standard, how many millions of farmers' sons have been dislodged into the unemployed of the cities, sacrifices to the machine and to farm efficiency—that efficiency which after all these sacrifices gives no decent living.

The Soviet Union proposes to solve this problem by abolishing the peasants entirely—by making them all like city workers, working for great farm enterprises owned and controlled collectively and with all the benefits that have always followed collective life in cities. Like the Russian factories, these great farm enterprises are also to be owned and controlled by the workers, who will receive the same cultural benefits the same social insurance, the same control of the products of their labor, that city workers under socialism secure. In place of the old isolation of the village, whose brutish surroundings produced what Lenin calls the "idiotism" of the peasant, a new type of human being is to be created, on the soil as well as in the towns. One of the oldest of all class antagonisms, that between city and country, is being abolished.

The nation in which this colossal change is occurring has been, till now, one of the most backward of peasant peoples. Before the war, in the central grain-growing regions, there were three home-made wooden plows to every metal plow. The peasant lands were divided according to a medieval system, by which a single family, with no more than twenty acres, might have this small amount split into from ten to thirty pieces. Cases were not wanting when the number of tiny strips of a single family reached even sixty. The land between the separate strips harbored weeds and pests; the strips were so small that a peasant could hardly turn his plow or harrow. The point of view of the peasant was equally medieval. In the spring a procession led by the priest sprinkled the fields with holy water, to secure a good harvest; for the needed rain the peasant also relied on prayers and processions. Most of the Russian peasants had only a single horse, while large numbers of peasant families had no horses

at all, but were forced to labor for others or to pay for the plowing of their soil. Tractors were regarded as "devil machines," bringing unclean spirits into the village; those advocating or bringing them were stoned.

### *Effects of the Revolution*

The first effect of the Revolution of 1917 was to seriously cut down the sown area. Partly this was due to the war's attrition, and the actual fighting over the whole land, which destroyed horses, plows and equipment. Partly it was due to the policy of the revolution, which gave poor peasants and farmhands an equal share of land with the peasants who were better off. But these poor peasants and farmhands could not plow their acres; and the state had not means enough to help them with either draft animals or tractors to any appreciable extent. Therefore their lands remained idle, or were rented by them to more prosperous peasants, a process which perpetuated the old exploitation which the revolution aimed to abolish.

After twelve years of revolution, the poor peasants and farmhands had received only a small part of its benefits. True, they had land; but were forced to rent it to exploiting peasants, or kulaks, for such sums as the latter offered. They had Self-Help Societies and credits from the state through their coöperatives; but what were these in comparison with the benefits the city workers were securing, in social insurance, higher standards of living, and rapidly increasing culture? Culture also was reaching the village, bringing with it knowledge of all the good things of life the peasant had never enjoyed. He wanted them.

When the poor peasant began to cry that he got no benefit from the revolution, and was as poor as ever, the kulak told him the solution was a higher price for grain. A higher price for grain meant the ruin of Russia's rapidly growing industries, and her hope of building socialism. In the crucial second

year of the Five-Year Plan, when all Russia tightens its belt and cuts down on food in order to buy machinery abroad and pay for power plants and railways and factories that will produce goods four years hence, the kulak tries to organize the peasants against the cities, and against the socialism the city workers are building.

It was clear that agriculture also must be modernized and made productive; otherwise it would fight and ruin the cities. Not higher prices for grain, said the Soviet Government, but greater productivity is the solution. For several years, on many collectivized farms with modern equipment, it was clearly proved that the labor of one unskilled youth or woman for three months' time, could raise all the food needed for a family of five for a year. The reason for the Russian peasant's poverty was the fact that most of his work went into waste motion, journeys to far-away fields, mending of ancient tools, trips to market to sell a few rubles' worth of produce. His solution was not to ask pay for waste motion, but to get rid of it.

A capitalist state gets rid of waste motion by slaughtering the slow and the poor; a state that is building socialism cannot. The widows, the orphans, the farmhands without horses were organized into collective farming groups, and the government gave aid. The lands and draft animals of all were pooled; the resultant gain in efficiency by the blotting out of the old strip-system, and by the combining of horses in plowing brigades showed in a single year an improvement over the average individual yield. When at last the state began to furnish tractors to collectives, then not only the poor peasant and farmhand, but the "middle peasant" as well, decided in great masses to join the *kolkhoz* (collective farm).

Collectivization was needed in the Soviet Union, first and most simply, as the only means whereby state aid could be efficiently given to poor peasants and farmhands unable to plow their lands. It was needed as the swiftest way to break down the incredibly primitive system of strip farming, and

throw all lands into large workable units. It was needed as a social form of control which would give the benefits of large-scale farming, not to a few exploiters but to the entire mass of toiling peasantry. It was needed to control the advent of machinery, so that instead of displacing vast hordes of peasantry into the ranks of wandering unemployed, it might raise swiftly the standards of all rural masses. It was needed, this year especially, to bring farming into harmony with the swift industrialization of the cities, and prevent a wrecking of the entire program of the Five-Year Plan for want of grain. It was needed finally, and for the future, in order to break down forever the division between country and city, and to make of the backward, superstitious, undisciplined peasant a citizen worker, sharing the building and fruits of socialism.

## II. THE WAVE OF COLLECTIVIZATION, 1929-1930

FROM the beginning of the revolution, collective farms of various kinds began to be formed in the Soviet Union. They got from the state approval but little financial help, for the state was still poor. Many of these first collectives failed; others succeeded, and remained as examples, arousing the surrounding peasants to collectivization. Most of these were small collectives, from ten to thirty families, securing some benefit from mutual labor, but few of the benefits possible by large-scale farming.

There were recognized three types of collectives, the TSOS, or Society for Joint Working of the land; the *artel*, in which land, implements and draft animals are held in common; and the *commune*, which socializes not only means of production but also articles of consumption, developing gradually towards common dining-halls, day nurseries, kindergartens, and common living facilities of all kinds. The TSOS, which was the prevailing form until late in 1919, had the benefit of simplicity and easy accommodation to peasant habits of individualism;

but it preserved old inequalities, in that its members were paid not only for their own labor, but for that of their horses; the crops of the poorer members paid tribute to the richer members for transport. The TSOS also had little discipline, and only small common funds to hold its members together; after every harvest it had large numbers of withdrawals and new entrances.

Most stable and disciplined of all forms is naturally the commune, but its complexities demand a high degree of socialization from its members. The Central Committee of the Communist Party, meeting in November, 1929, declared that, while the commune is the recommended form for the future, it makes too great demands for the peasant's present level of culture and discipline. The artel, in which means of production are socialized, was advocated as the form which would give the united strength of all for production, while avoiding the additional complexities demanded by the commune.

During the first twelve years of the revolution, the growth of these collective farms was steady, but slow. By the summer of 1929 it was estimated that they supplied some 7% of the marketable grain of the Soviet Union. This was considered at that time a creditable showing. In the autumn of 1929 it was announced that the collective farms, or kolkhozes, had tripled during the twelvemonth past, and were expected by the end of the Five-Year Plan to supply 20-25% of the marketable grain of the nation.

But by the fall of 1929 the collectivization movement, which had gathered momentum for several months of spring and summer, passed with a bound into a speed which was in itself a revolution. "Even the Revolution of 1917 didn't move as fast as this," was the statement I often heard on the Volga. Figures and estimates were outdated in a week; in a month they were cause for laughter, so far were all estimates behind the rapid growth of collectivization.

In a county of the Lower Volga, they told me, "We gather statistics on collectivization every ten days. On November 20,

our county was 50% collectivized; on December 1, it was 65%; we expect 100% by January 1."

To travel through the Lower Volga region at this time was like living in a whirlwind; one could not catch one's breath. Not only the numbers of kolkhozes grew, but their size expanded. No longer the little artels of ten or a dozen families were uniting; but whole villages were combining their land and plowing winter fallow together in October. By November dozens of villages united together; farms were organized as big as townships; by December, a single farm might take in a whole county.

One found kolkhozes whose united "farm" totaled 700,000 acres, and possessed 130 tractors and 14,000 horses. No sooner was this announced than another "farm" surpassed it; a craze for size for a time held sway. Men talked of single "farms" to occupy entire provinces. Then farm experts sent by the government began to district these "farms" into sizable economic measures, uniting them around present or future mills, creameries and slaughterhouses, to be owned by the state and the collective peasants jointly.

Terrific was the need of organization. The Communist Party sent out a call for 25,000 city workers, chosen for their ability in social and cultural organization, to volunteer two years' service in the organization of collective farms. All farm experts were mobilized; at a later date came a mobilization of book-keepers. The wave of collectivization had become an elemental force, needing form and direction.

By the end of 1929, Stalin was able to report, in an historic address made before the All-Union Conference of Agrarian Marxists on December 27, "the basic fact of our economic life at the present is the colossal growth of the collective farm movement." At the same time he declared that the time had come not only to "limit the kulak" (the exploiting peasant living on hired labor or on control of machinery or loaning of money), but to "liquidate the kulak as a class." This class in the past few years, through their loans to poorer peasants

and their ownership of threshers and mills, had controlled a large part of Russia's marketable grain, which they used against the government. A single autumn made it clear that the country could henceforth produce its grain without them. The kulaks, furthermore, were fighting the collectives by every means up to murder and arson, for they saw themselves doomed if the poor ever became independent.

### *"Liquidating" the Kulaks*

With the announcement of this slogan, "liquidation of the kulak as a class," the rural districts entered a period of greatly intensified class war which was at first chaotic. The widest variety of action took place; in one district kulaks' houses were unroofed, to compel the family to leave the district; in others, adult males were taken to jail on various charges; in others, kulaks gained control of the local village governments and escaped all pressures, even that of taxation.

On February 5, the Soviet Government issued the expected decree which announced that "in the regions where solid collectivization has taken place, the laws permitting the renting of land and the hiring of labor should be held in abeyance." The governments of these regions were authorized to fight "kulakdom," if one may coin a word for the Russian collective noun, by any means up to confiscation of property and expulsion from the district if necessary.

The result of this decree was a systematizing of the form of attack on kulaks. The accepted and legal manner of "liquidation" became a mass meeting of poor peasants and farm-hands, initiated by the local Communists, passing a resolution that such and such persons in the village were kulaks, "and we request the district authorities to confiscate their property and exile them from our district since they seriously menace the work of the kolkhoz." Meetings of this type took place over the whole of the Lower Volga in a period of ten days; throughout the country the time was scarcely longer. These

meetings presented the local district authorities with tens of thousands of names—candidates for confiscation and exile. The authorities at once appointed “testing commissions,” not for the sake of protecting kulaks, but to determine whether the listed names were indeed kulaks, and whether the demand was a genuine mass demand or inspired by some local official’s personal grudge or craving for power.

The task was colossal; the land was shaken to its depths by a revolutionary upheaval. The poor peasants and farm-hands, led by the local Communists, were taking power and property away from the former “strong men” of the village and turning their livestock into a common fund. The movement was marked by all the ruthlessness, enthusiasm, class hate, and excesses of revolution. Together with the liquidation of kulaks went increased pressure to join the collectives “or be marked as a kulak.”

During this period it was necessary to give the first indication of the actual strength of the collectives by collecting a common “Seed Fund” from all members, and exchanging it for cleaned and selected seed from the state. It was also necessary to organize the working program of the collectives, so that each member might know with what brigade he should work, on what piece of land, with what implements and draft-animals. The animals themselves must be collected under one control and fed extra rations to prepare for spring labor. A colossal task, in which mistakes not only by the thousand, but by the million, were inevitable.

If in 1917 there were Ten Days that Shook the World, there now came in Russia “Thirty days that changed the future of farming.” In thirty days from January 20 to February 20, more than one-third of all Russia’s peasants joined collective farms, making by March 1 a total of 55% of the total peasantry, or 59% of those eligible for membership, excluding kulaks. On January 20, 4,300,000 peasant households were in collectives; on February 20, 14,000,000 were enrolled, a three-fold increase in thirty days. Taking the figures by

acreage: on January 20, some 77 million acres were collectivized, about one-sixth the total arable land. Ten days later, the figure touched 122 million, in another ten days 172 million, and by February 20 it had reached 206 million, or 52% of the arable land of the Soviet Union. During those thirty days 130,000,000 bushels of seed grain were collected in peasants' collective granaries, to be exchanged for cleaned, selected seed of the state. At the same time the figure of collectivized animals rose from 5.5% of the horses and oxen to 44%, marking the even swifter change from the old form of TSOS to the artel.

The overwhelming success of the collectivization made possible the statement by Stalin on March 2, reënforced by a Party stipulation a week later, which demanded a lessened pressure throughout the rural districts, and a more careful consideration of methods. Revolutions are neither as uniformly enthusiastic as their leaders like to believe, nor are they "mere arbitrary dictation" as their opponents claim. In this the collectivization of the Soviet Union which reached its height in January and February was no exception. It contained large masses of driving, desirous peasants, and also large masses of unwilling or only half willing followers. It contained organizers of experience, and dizzy organizers who lost their heads and collectivized by violence, laying up trouble for the future.

### *"Dizziness from Success"*

Stalin's statement of March 2, which, like his "liquidation" statement of December 27, is a history-making announcement, was called "Dizziness from success." It announced first the stupendous and unexpected growth of the collectivization movement, and followed this by denouncing those comrades who had "grown dizzy." It emphasized two facts: first, that collectivization must be voluntary, or it was no collectivization at all; and second, that the Party considered the artel and not the commune the basic form for the present stage of de-

velopment, and that collectivization of pigs, chickens, dwelling-houses, dishes, and the one lone cow of the family, must stop.

These statements marked no change from the Party policy enunciated the previous autumn, which had also fixed the artel as the basic form. But they marked a very great change from the policy that was actually being pursued in perhaps the largest part of the local organizations, by organizers eager to make records and not careful as to means. It came as such a shock to many local enthusiasts, that, had it come earlier, it might well have injured the collection of the Seed Fund. It was carefully timed to follow the successful gathering of seed, and the listing of half the peasants in collectives, but to allow the necessary reorganization and righting of mistakes before the actual sowing season.

During March there followed in many regions a large exodus from the collective farms, often followed, after explanations, by reentries. This wavering was especially marked in regions near the larger cities, where organizers had collectivized cows, which were now given back to owners and in other places where forcible pressure or a purely paper organization had been marks of the movement. Since the collectives had already far outrun the ability of the government to give tractors and credits, and the ability of the Party to supply even partly efficient organizers, a drop in numbers by the falling off of those who joined under pressure was much to be desired.

At present, in April, 1930, the proportion of peasants in the collectives is estimated as about 40% of all peasants. In regions where Tractor Stations offer greatly improved mechanized farming, nearly all join the kolkhoz. Even without the tractor, collectivization remains strong and stable wherever the example of an experienced artel or commune or the leadership of a good organizer makes benefits clear to the members. Since, however, the movement has far outrun the possibility of efficient organization, other waves of advance and retreat are likely. Many organizers believe that at harvest will come

a combined wave of entering and leaving collectives, dependent on the proper or improper fixing of the "conditional wages" and on the good or bad organization of other technical sides of the work.

It is quite clear, however, that a revolution has already taken place permanently in Soviet farming. What is this new type of farming, which has clearly come to stay?

It begins by annihilating all boundaries fixed by past ownership, and establishing new bounds fixed year by year by farm experts, in accordance with the economic unit best handled by the available machinery. Whole villages plow together, under an elected management, with a working plan made by farm experts. Even before the tractor comes, they plow, harrow and sow by division of labor, as a factory is organized. And just as factories are located, not by chance, but by study of raw materials and transportation, so the new farming is not left to the chance whim of the peasant. Its products, its seeds, its forms are planned under a General Staff of Sowing, governing a whole township, and responsible to still higher authority. Hundreds of millions of rubles are poured out by the state to organize Agro-Industrial Combinats, consisting of modern packing-houses, gigantic mills, creameries and cheese factories, working up the farm products and planned with reference to the region served. And a vision lies ahead of Socialist Farm-Cities, in which men shall enjoy the spring and autumn seasons of farm labor, while living in well built cities, and supplementing farm work with that of the factory. Such is the new farming which has begun in the Soviet Union.

### III. THE DRAMA OF SPRING SOWING

#### *The Spring Moves North*

CLOSE after the statement of Stalin on March 2, which announced the successful collection of the Collective Seed

Fund, and the need of a more careful avoidance of excesses, the drama of spring sowing began. The papers on March 5 had a dispatch from Rostov: "The winter wheat of North Caucasus comes from under the snow in satisfactory condition. An early spring is expected."

On the very next day, as I looked from my Moscow window into a snowstorm, the headlines were shouting: "Sowing in two days." The newspaper informed me, again from Rostov: "A warm wind is blowing from the south in Tersk region. Sowing will start in two or three days." All over the snow-covered lands of Russia, millions read this dispatch and knew that a thousand miles to the south, the spring had begun. The same day carried a complaint from Odessa: "Kharkov is slow with the selected seed and seems indifferent. Warm, sunny weather; plowing starts soon."

Next day the news came three thousand miles from Central Asia. "Alma Ata— In the southern parts of Kazakstan the sowing has begun." . . . And a disquieting dispatch from Tashkent informed us that "The Shurais collective farm tried a plowing rehearsal yesterday and showed itself quite unready. No brigades were organized; the members did not know the boundaries of their plowing; the implements were unrepaired."

Here is indication of what the collective farms must do to meet the spring. Members must be organized in brigades, land must be properly divided into working units, implements and livestock must all be in condition, and properly assigned to their tasks. Each man must know his task and place of labor. This is to be organized in a single month over half the population of Russia! An incredible task!

On March 8 came the first real sowing in an important grain region. The dispatch arrived from Kharkov: "Sowing has begun in the South Ukraine. The first in the field was the commune 'Ukrainian Giant' and its two filiales 'Green Meadows' and 'Free Labor.' They began harrowing to-day. In the evening the seeders were prepared for work on the 9th. . . . The commune 'Ukrainian Giant' was well prepared. Imple-

ments and machines were ready down to the last bolt. Every worker knew where, when, and how he was expected to work. On the evening before field work, the members were made acquainted with the norms of work in every kind of labor. The fuel supply for tractors was organized in time. In fact, the preparatory work was so well done that the very first day the norms of work were exceeded by 7%.... In Kirvolge district the first in the field was the kolkhoz 'Karl Marx,' divided into eight working brigades, which sowed yesterday 135 acres."

Meantime, a little farther north the collective farms are holding their "sowing rehearsals." "In the Solonian district the artel 'Road to Socialism,' which covers 8300 acres, yesterday held an interesting sowing rehearsal. At the appointed hour all members gathered as one man. On the signal one tractor after another moved out across the field. All members showed great enthusiasm. On the field was tested the position of workers, and the condition of the implements. Acting as expert judges was a group of the 'patrons' of the artel—workers from the Locomotive Factory.... The sowing rehearsal went off splendidly and was closed by a lively meeting."

Steadily, day after day, the spring moves north in Russia and the Ukraine; new kolkhozes in new districts take the field. Problems and needs are telegraphed to central headquarters, and day after day Moscow issues leaflets and programs to meet them. One day the model constitution for collective farms appears in the press, and is at once issued in an edition of a million leaflets. Another day carries working directions by Yurkin, who last year organized the Gigant, the largest wheat farm in the world, and this year is president of the Central Union of Collective Farms. He lays down a plan for workers' brigades, stating the various forms of wages, how much advance shall be given farmhands before harvest. His technical directions set standards in collective farms which control nearly half the acreage of Russia.

Everywhere the first procession to the fields was marked

by celebrations—red banners, music, orchestras. Yet everywhere also, were many wavering peasants, slipping into collective farms and out again. Some of those who left, when Stalin declared collectivization voluntary, returned again to the kolkhoz when they saw it move to the field. Others made no formal return, but went to plow and sow together with the collectives, saying: "We will not break the sowing. Afterwards, we shall see whether we will join or not."

### *Sowing Time in Hopiorsk*

Steadily, but slowly, the spring moved north. It would not reach Moscow for another month and a half. So I decided to go south to meet the springtime. I found it in Hopiorsk, some thirty hours by rail south of Moscow, in the Lower Volga region. Hopiorsk is a "region" of 450,000 persons of whom 90% are engaged in farming, chiefly grain, with some livestock. Here live the famous Cossacks of the Don, in hamlets smaller than most of the Russian villages. Most of these peasants fought in the White armies during the civil war. Many former White Guard leaders survive as kulaks and kulak partisans, often seriously corrupting the governments of local villages. Yet to-day Hopiorsk is a region of "solid collectivization," which means that in practically every hamlet the majority have joined collectives.

One cannot learn about collectives by traveling merely to railway points and district centers. The impressions gained along the railway are not only incomplete; they are the absolute contrary of the basic situation. Along the railway gather all the complaints, all the injustices, all the failures. My train set me down at midnight at Alexikovo station; I waited there till three in the morning hearing one complaint after another.

A demobilized red soldier claims that his divorced wife and two children have had all their property confiscated, which he gave them on divorce, "since she is the daughter of a kulak."

Tales like this can be picked up at any railway station in

Hopiorsk. It is impossible to know how much is true, how much false. The region authorities confirm the general fact that such things have happened. There has been a case of a bandit who was president of a village. There have been many cases of collectives organized under threats, and now falling apart. There have been other cases of confiscation of the property of poor families. In fact, so many cases of excesses have there been, that one hundred and eight officials have in one month been removed from their posts in this one region; forty-six by Party means, and sixty-two by criminal prosecution for their repressive measures against peasants. Yet Hopiorsk is considered not a bad region. In any capitalist land, such widespread arrest of officials would indicate governmental collapse. Here it is merely an incident, affecting the spring sowing hardly at all.

As soon as I left the railroad and reached the collective farms, the atmosphere changed. Tens of kilometers of rich black earth in a single piece, combining the lands of twenty-two hamlets—such was the commune “Fortress of Communism.” In its fields at regular intervals, brigades were working, brigades of oxen, brigades of horses, and one brigade of seven ancient tractors, from four to seven years old. They were driven night and day, stopping only for refueling, and “half an hour at night to cool a little, just so you can touch it with your hand.”

At night the fields were dotted with lights of the encamped brigades. Music of balalaikas arose; motion pictures and political discussions were held in these encampments. All the kolkhozniki said: “It is easier and merrier working together. Some plow, some harrow, some seed, and some mend harness. Now even the horseless peasant finds constant work. We are planting twice what these same people planted last year.”

None of these kolkhozniki went to the railroad. None of them had time. To the railroad went all the misfits, all the failures. But over the black fields, the kolkhozniki were completing the most dramatic sowing in history. They were build-

ing in a single spring the agricultural basis of socialism. Day after day, as I watched their steady, peaceful labor, the complaining crowds I had met at the railway stations seemed like chaff brushed off from a great harvest.

The commune "Fortress of Communism" was the type of collective that is succeeding. It was no sudden growth of compulsion, but the fruit of years of devotion. Ten years ago, in the war-torn fields, seven families of red soldiers decided to plow together, coming each from his own home in different villages. In the first years the men carried rifles to the fields, against the remnant guerrillas of White Guards, against bandit bands, and their heirs, the kulaks. They collected enough harvest to build a central barn and dwelling, to which all moved. But during the first four years they had neither beds nor bedding, but slept in hay.

When their first really good harvest in 1924 gave them a surplus, they not only bought bedding, but made first payment on a tractor. To get it, they sold livestock; they placed the cherished machine in their summer kitchen. On the night before Christmas a gang of kulaks poured kerosene on the tractor and the building, and burned it. The desperate communars, by going again on short rations, managed to raise 300 rubles for repairing it. To-day that tractor still works in the tractor brigade.

By 1928 the "Fortress of Communism" was so successful that within a radius of five miles nine other communes and two artels had sprung up to copy it. Nearly all were small, averaging thirty families. In the spring of 1929 came the Party instructions to form larger kolkhozes. By winter the "Fortress of Communism" had enlarged to take in all the others and many individual members—to the total of 957 families. More than half of these new members were farm-hands or poor peasants, having little food. So again the whole commune went on short rations. Yet the spirit of the old communars held firm.

In general throughout Hopiorsk I found that Stalin's state-

ment had been accepted not as a change of policy, but as a sharper fixing of limits, a curtailing of hot-heads. Before the statement arrived, the "testing commissions" of the region had been busy, and many of the removals from office were made before the statement, which, however, gave them reënforcement.

### *The Part Played by City Workers*

In the fields of Hopiorsk were not only the peasants. Every kind of brigade poured into the villages: city workers, students, professors, judges, bookkeepers, young Communists, to help the collective farms. A brigade of opera singers from Leningrad was touring the Budarino district, to sing for the festive processions that opened the sowing. A white-haired professor of astronomy with a lantern-slide lecture was sent from the University of Leningrad to give cultural lectures to field brigades. Astronomy in the midst of class war, and problems of sowing, division of labor, repair of implements? "Why not," said the president of the commune, "the field brigades like cultural lectures."

Farm experts from every agricultural college were mobilized to work out the programs for collectives; bookkeepers from government offices were thrown into the fields on a three months' campaign of bringing some order into the collective accounting. Brigades of Young Communists, city bred youths and maidens, were following a harrow for the first time in their lives, under the laughing instruction of the peasant boys and girls. Their "party work" was not merely to help the kolkhoz with labor, but to strengthen the local organization of Young Communists.

Newspaper brigades there were also, whose task was to ferret out abuses and expose them. The largest such group I met later in Stalingrad, a remarkable newspaper known as the *Traveling Borba*, or "Struggle," consisting of three railway cars holding editors, reporters, printers and printing

press, which spent two weeks in each district and issued on the spot the first local newspaper these peasants had ever enjoyed. The *Traveling Struggle* boasted two hundred arrested officials as its trophy in four months. They had unearthed bandits in charge of local soviets; they had discovered hot-heads who collectivized "seven villages in seven days" by threats and decrees; they had organized and published abroad model working brigades, shock brigades, socialist rivalries between kolkhozes.

Assisting them in their work was a brigade of judges, the most unique, I think, of all the brigades I met. When the *Traveling Struggle* discovered in one district eleven village soviets in the hands of kulaks, who were committing all sorts of excesses against the poorer peasants, they summoned a "brigade of judges" from the Stalingrad Superior Court. These judges were thrown at once into the villages, and six days later the *Traveling Struggle* was announcing a dozen sentences of the officials exposed in their first number.

The president of "Fortress of Communism" outlined for me the various brigades that had helped his commune, between December and April.

In December came a brigade of women, sent under the Women's Section of the Party. They added to themselves local women and held meetings in all our twenty-two hamlets. One big cause of failure in collectives is the opposition of backward women. Much of the good spirit in our commune today is the result of that women's brigade.

At the same time came a Repair Brigade from the Moscow Amo Automobile Factory, consisting of five mechanics who overhauled all our machinery as a free gift from the Amo workers. Then came a brigade from the regional committee of the Party, to make suggestions on our general plan of work and organization. At present we have a brigade of twenty-nine Young Communists from the railway town, Filonova, working with our boys and girls in the fields.

Most important is the brigade of seven workers from the Amo Automobile Factory, assigned from the 25,000 to work with us for two years. One of them is a vice-president; another is head of our machine shop, a third and fourth are managers of two of our economic subdivisions into which our commune is divided for convenience

of work. A fifth is secretary of our Party Collective—the combination of all Party members in all our hamlets. All these workers have much experience in social and organizational work in trade unions, and though they know little of farming, they are none the less very useful.

Besides this two of the Amo workers have already been elected presidents of the village soviets where they live. Does this surprise you? They came first as representatives of the district to collect the Seed Fund, and did this hard work well, without compulsion but with good agitation. The peasants saw that they were literate men and able fellows, who would live here two years, so in the February elections they made them presidents.

Such is the process whereby city workers are flowing into villages, joining with peasants in the tasks of collective farming. It is a process as important as the collective farming itself. It is breaking down the old barriers between city and village. No more shall there be workers and peasants; the words already are "kolkhoz workers" and "factory workers." They are building swiftly the basis of a socialist society in which the oldest antagonism, that between city and country, is disappearing.

### *The Party Organizers*

A survey of the forces pouring from city into village is incomplete without at least a brief view of the work of Communist Party organizers. I had the good fortune to be present in a very backward Tartar village, on the poor sandy soil below Stalingrad, when a Party secretary of the district came to have a talk with ten men who had just left the collective farm. The reasons given were many: a farmhand complained that his clothes were torn and thin, and the kolkhoz gave him no advance wages but put him to work pasturing animals in the cold night. A "middle peasant" complained that his camel, now kolkhoz property, was being poorly fed and worked to death. Chief among the complaints were that the women were fighting the kolkhoz; one stalwart Tartar almost wept as he told how his wife refused to heat the bath-house, or put on

the samovar, or have any relations with him at all when he returned once a week from the field brigade.

The district secretary expended an hour of the most persuasive talking I ever heard on this unappreciative audience of ten backward men. The Soviet Government, he said, and every loyal citizen, must fight to widen the sown area. "Our land is surrounded by capitalist lands, and to gain independence we must swiftly build great industry and modern farming. The giant Tractor Factory you see in Stalingrad will this summer send tractors to the fields. The giant Power Station, Stalgres, will this autumn give electric lights to your homes. While these great works are unfinished, we need bread for their workers; we cannot get this increase in bread if every peasant sits at home, deciding when to plow. This year is like 1917 when we went with rifles in hand to take power. Now we must take the front of husbandry."

His arguments failed. From time to time the door flung open, and sharp women's voices summoned forth their men. The secretary, in spite of his utmost persuasiveness, was forced to let them go. Then swiftly, without wasting a word on regrets, he turned to the five Communists who had been with him during the hearing. "Kulak agitation is going on in the field brigades and among the women," he said. "You—and you—and you—to-morrow into the fields, working each in a different brigade." Thus he pulls from their work local librarians and students, and flings them into sowing to strengthen morale in the field. He censures the kolkhoz president for thoughtlessness, and orders clothes for shivering farmhands; he arranges for hay from Stalingrad. He promises to get at once a Tartar woman organizer, for a few days' work in this village. He directs the local Party secretary to send traveling libraries at once to the field brigades.

Thus swiftly he marshaled his forces for attack, without waste motion or waste thought. It was able generalship, worthy a large sphere, and this was only a backward Tartar village on poor soil. Into every one of such distant villages the Party

penetrates, organizing all forces for the building of socialism, even in these wastes.

#### IV. ORGANIZING THE LABOR ON COLLECTIVE FARMS

THE agricultural expert of the commune "Fortress of Communism" thus outlined for me the preliminary work he had done in preparing for the spring sowing:

My first task was to plan the use of the soil. Our commune expanded suddenly from 35 to 957 households; we had a program of 45,000 acres to seed this spring. The state asks that half of this, at least, be planted to grain crops; we decided to give more than half. First I surveyed the land and made maps showing the type of soil and the previous crop history,—a complicated task, since the 957 families all had several pieces. I also noted where the soil dries earliest; formerly some hamlets started regularly three days ahead of others, but now that we are all in one collective farm, we all start early on the land that dries first, and thus gain several days more for sowing. . . .

This plan must be made, not by me alone, but by all our twenty-two hamlets in mass discussion. To this end we not only hold meetings in every hamlet, but delegate meetings from all the hamlets together. I also interviewed personally every peasant who came to the office of the kolkhoz during three months for any reason whatever. I asked him about the land and crops of his hamlet, and got his advice for the spring sowing. I myself did not live here formerly; I am among the thousands of farm experts mobilized by the government and sent to help the collective farms for two years. On the basis of my knowledge and the local peasants' information, we work out joint plans.

All this amazingly complex system is created in a single winter for nearly half the peasants of the Soviet Union. Fifty million peasants, speaking many languages, primitive, undisciplined, organized into a factory system of farming with division of labor in a single spring! Clearly the possible mistakes run not into thousands, but millions. And of each mistake the kulaks sit ready to take advantage, inciting the

peasants against each suggestion of the farm expert, stirring up the women. This is one reason why masses of poor peasants demand their expulsion from the lands now worked in common.

Remarkable cases of local efficiency occur. In one kolkhoz, an investigator who arrived while snow was still on the ground, found that all plows, harrows, seeders had been repaired, sorted by brigades, heaped on separate carts, and all stood under shelter ready to proceed to the fields. The working animals were all being fed extra food under one management. It goes without saying that such forehanded groups are unusual. Often the "sowing rehearsal" discovers grave shortcomings. Yet with all shortcomings and confusion, the sowing goes faster than it ever has gone in these villages before. It goes faster just as a factory goes faster than handicraft shops, and for the same reasons: division and specialization of labor, and the coming of the machine. The new machines are still very far below the need for them; but everywhere their presence makes itself felt.

### *The Work of Tractor Stations*

We have so far described chiefly the collective farms based on oxen and horses, since these are by far the most numerous to-day in the Soviet Union. But the future technique of all collective farming will be the Tractor Station, plowing all the land within a given radius which at present is usually fixed as ten miles. Wherever the Tractor Stations appear, collectivization follows swiftly, since every peasant sees the benefits at once.

The technique of the Tractor Station was first worked out by the Shevchenko Tractor Station near Odessa, which began in 1927 by plowing for five villages. The following years these increased to twenty-five. By the spring of 1930 the Tractor Station was working the soil for 76 villages, a total of 150,000 acres. The farm experts of the Tractor Station planned with

the local peasants the crop rotation of the fields and the organization of the labor into brigades. Each village sent young men to the Tractor Station to learn to run tractors. These were given jobs as helpers in the winter repair work of the station, and returned to their villages in spring as drivers of machines.

The Tractor Station works no land for itself. Its function is to furnish all machinery, plows, harrows, seeders, reapers, threshers, to the cluster of villages around it. It supplies also farm experts and repair men. Aside from this, the peasants themselves do the actual labor. How do they work, and how do they divide the harvest?

Here, for instance, in the village of Naikova, is Margarita Klaus, a widow with four children, two of whom are old enough to labor. She is entitled by the size of her family to 32 acres of land; this is now part of a field farmed collectively. She is informed through the plan made by the elected Field Manager and passed at a general meeting, that she, or some member of her family, must do 54.50 rubles worth of work during the summer at the times indicated by the manager. On one day her son works hauling water; on another her daughter works weeding millet; on another the whole family takes its turn at the thresher. With a total of eighty days' labor by one adult (or twenty-seven days by the three adults of her family), Margarita Klaus earns her share of harvest. She gets at harvest time an ample supply of bread, millet, corn, vegetables to feed her entire family for a year, and in addition to this 74 rubles in money. This is as much as she previously got with continuous labor by her whole family.

These facts, an actual typical case, make clear the real situation in the Russian village. Margarita Klaus is still painfully poor, even after the Tractor Station plows her land. But she begins at once to get the same food she got before for her entire family, with an expenditure of less than half the labor. Each adult, in return for one month's work, gets food for a year for himself and a child. Clearly this is good pay; the

problem here is not higher prices for grain, but more labor, better arranged through the year.

This leads at once to the second task of the Tractor Station —the widening of agriculture into more productive branches. In the second year of the Shevchenko Tractor Station, the manager was able to report: "We have already solved the problems of grain raising. Our next task is to use the labor thus released for intensive farming. We shall this year expand cattle raising, vineyards and orchards." The Tractor Station became a branch of the Agricultural Bank, buying imported French vines, and good livestock and fruit trees for 76 villages at once.

The Shevchenko Tractor Station proved so successful that it was adopted as model for two hundred similar stations, established all over the country in 1930. There were nine such stations along the railway line in Hopiorsk during my spring visit. They also, eventually, would have 200 tractors each, of the 15-30 horse-power type; but this year they began with an average of fifty tractors. The early spring, three weeks before schedule, threw plans into confusion. Three freight ships were unloading at Novorosisk in the Black Sea, shipping tractors north with right of way over all other shipments.

The 39 tractors at Rakovka Station disked heavy land and also seeded, as there were not enough horse-drawn seeders to sow the area planned. They worked the lands of twelve hamlets, but in order to spread the benefits of their work over a larger region, they requested the entire district of 168,000 acres to organize in three large kolkhozes. Thus the harvest they helped gain for twelve hamlets was spread over all the others.

I sat in a conference of the farm experts of this Tractor Station, meeting with the presidents of the local kolkhozes. "The brigadiers in charge of each brigade are not making clear accounts of each man's labor," complained the book-keeper. "We shall have labor bills in autumn and not know what for." One remembers Lenin's insistence on accounting;

here is an example of its need. Another mentioned the lack of clocks as very serious, since "the first shift begins at 3.30 in the morning, but no one has a watch or clock, so how do they know when to begin or change shift?" Clocks are rarely found in rural Russia; what an incredible task it seems to introduce modern factory systems with divisions of labor, without clocks to tell the time! This is typical of the contrasts and great changes.

### *The Socialist Farm-City*

We have seen how the Tractor Stations release more than half the labor of the village. We have also seen how the city workers are pouring into the country, to organize the work of collective farms. These facts lead next to the future organization of labor, in which the lines between city and country shall be broken. The released labor of the farms is not drained away to the larger industrial centers, as happened in America; it is immediately turned to creating a new life in the country.

In a dozen places I have seen it happening. Near Shevchenko Tractor Station the surplus labor has turned at once to orchards and vineyards; near Balandin, on the Lower Volga, the villages put up brick kilns and are building schools, dining-halls, clubs for their own future living, while also erecting cheese-factories, creameries, slaughter-houses, and modern mills. Hundreds of millions of rubles of credits are going out from the Central Government for such purposes; the local collectives also furnish funds from their harvests as well as much labor.

One of the most ambitious of all these projects is the Socialist Farm-City of Filonova, which is being built on local funds plus government credits, under the general management of the Timiryasev Agricultural Academy of Moscow. A board of fifteen farm experts is in permanent charge of the task; Professor Bushinskova is already conducting the soil survey;

the students of the Academy will make topographical surveys as practice work. The Academy is also to send down a brigade of livestock specialists to test all the cattle, eliminate the unfit and organize the breeding.

The estimated cost of this Socialist Farm-City is over \$50,000,000, of which 70% will be raised by the local collective farms and the rest from state credits. How are these poverty-stricken peasants, many of whom last year had neither food nor horses, to raise this enormous sum? The answer is simple: by planned organization of their surplus labor. Work which could not be done by individual peasants can be done by farm collectives. Let us take up the plan year by year.

During the first year, 1930, three Tractor Stations begin to work the collective fields. This spring they have already 150 tractors; by autumn there will be 300. In the spring of 1930 a net-work of telephone lines goes out across the country. The collective peasants have already cut the poles, were only delayed from erecting them by the early sowing; immediately after the sowing they return to this labor. The State Department of Posts and Telegraphs does the rest as an experimental demonstration of the best way of uniting a whole district by telephone. They also are working out norms for the future.

Road-making is next in line; it starts over the whole district as soon as spring sowing ends. The machinery is furnished through the Tractor Stations; the work is done by the collectivized peasants. By autumn there will be a well planned system of dirt roads across the districts, the trunk lines of which in succeeding years will be steadily graveled. By autumn the Tractor Stations will erect central garages and a machine shop. During the summer a small brick kiln is already heaping up reserves of bricks; as soon as the collective harvests bring funds into the district, the work will be begun on a central cow stable near Filonova. This is to be located across the river from the farm-city, where the stream makes a great sweep around vast meadows. It will grow into a whole Cow City, with 90,000 animals, and a slaughter-house and dairy

business. The first year, however, this Cow City will house only the cows of the small town of Filonova and the new breeding stock for the district. It will thus begin to clean out the animals from the buildings where the future farm-city is to rise.

The second year, 1931, begins in the autumn of 1930 with a single plan of crop rotation over the entire district of 600,000 acres. This year begins also the building of a bacon factory costing about \$900,000, and a cheese factory, costing \$750,000, for which credits come from the state. There begins also a Food Factory Combinat, which will cost \$3,000,000 when completed, and will include a sausage factory, a bread factory, a factory of soft drinks, and a factory kitchen cooking meals for 60,000 people—the whole of the future Filonova. To build this Food Combinat Filonova will import foreign experts. The second year will also be marked by the building of a central laundry, an electric power-plant, a water and sewage system, and the expansion of the cow-barns. In this year the schools will begin to have ten-year courses of education including trade training.

In the third year the factories will be completed and 50% of the new workers' dwellings will be begun. (Meantime the workers live in the ancient town of Filonova and the adjacent hamlets.) In the fourth year the new houses will be finished, and the peasants will move to the city. How will they live?

Architects are competing with many designs for this farm-city. The present favored type of housing calls for three-story brick houses, each planned for 1000 adults, and the proportionate number of children. All adults capable of labor, from eighteen to sixty years of age, will live in these houses, each having a separate room. A man and wife have two rooms, adjoining. Each person has a norm of eight square meters floor space, which is considered adequate, since the rooms are only for retirement. All dining, social life and care of children take place in the common rooms of the house.

A suite of nursery rooms in each of these big House Com-

binats will hold all babies up to the age of three, under care of nurses. A suite of kindergarten rooms will hold the older youngsters from three to seven, under the care of teachers. The children of school age will leave the house entirely, and live in school dormitories in a continuous routine of work, study, and play; during the free hours of which they may visit their parents or receive visits. All will receive ten years of schooling, but from the age of fifteen they will have also four hours' productive labor daily, planned in connection with their education.

In the big Living Houses will be many rooms for collective use: dining-hall, kitchen, library, club-rooms, even a small audience hall. But the city will also have a central Palace of Culture, with large theater, motion pictures, gymnasium. The entire farm-city will be organized as a commune, in which children and aged are supported by the whole collective, while all adults get food, shelter and education free for a certain minimum of required labor. Above this minimum, wages are paid for varying amounts and kinds of work.

Such is the plan of the Socialist Farm-City of Filonova. It sounds like the Utopias dreamed of for centuries. But a great Agricultural College is in charge of building it, and a state budget is behind its expenses, and the collectivized peasants are already doing the work. Thus are Utopias brought to earth by the planning of experts, the labor of enthusiastic collectives, and the support of state funds.

This plan was originated by the minds of Hopiorsk peasants and their local Party organizers; it was worked out by the Agricultural School. "In the days to come," they say, "the work of sowing and reaping will be done by organized groups going out from the cities, of which the thousands of workers' brigades and the festive processions to the fields are this year a forerunner. The workers of the towns will thus secure variety of life and healthful labor. The drudgery of the isolated farm, snow-bound, uncultured, will vanish forever."

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